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of a chelik's absence from the ghotul to seduce his motiari. These things happen, but they are condemned. 883X

The chelik themselves consider that this type of ghotul has several great advantages. The first, characteristically, is the very practical one that if a girl becomes pregnant 'they know the thief'. Elsewhere it is naturally often difficult to fix the responsibility of fatherhood. Again, the chelik say that a great deal of trouble is saved. 'We know what to do; there is no jealousy or dispute; everything is settled, and there is no more to be said.' I think it is true that there is less strain and anxiety in these ghotul; and there is room for the development of deep intimacy and romantic attachment. In the pre-nuptial period, however, it may be argued that these things are not altogether desirable. 836

They certainly lead to greater conflict with the parents over marriage. Many chelik and motiari look forward with misery to separation from the partner who has shared with them the happy days of youth, and occasionally—but only occasionally—ghotul partners elope together rather than face a separation. Statistics here are striking. Out of the 2000 marriages examined, 1884 were celebrated according to the wishes of the parents and the great majority of cases were of the cross-cousin type. Of the 116 irregular marriages, 77 were those of chelik who married their 'ghotul-wives'. Only 39 irregular marriages were reported from the other type of ghotul. In view of the smaller number of men from the *jodidār* ghotul, these figures indicate a proportion of about 1 in every 9 of chelik in this type of ghotul who had conflict with their parents, and only 1 in about 32 from the other type of ghotul. 883X 836 583

Of those who married their 'ghotul-wives', 9 out of 77 divorced them later, giving a proportion of 11·6 per cent against a proportion of 2·9 per cent of divorces for the whole 2000 marriages. It is interesting that the proportion of divorces among Lamhada—the other type of chelik who live in close contact with their future wives before marriage—is almost exactly the same, 11·5 per cent. And although 77 and 113 cases respectively are not sufficient for us to draw far-reaching conclusions, it is undoubtedly striking that there should be so high an incidence of divorce among these and only among these two classes of people. 883X 836 586

Yet even though a passionate ghotul attachment is not the best preparation for a life-long union, at the time separation seems tragic indeed. A girl especially, whose chelik marries someone else, is a pathetic figure. 'Her life has left her'—so they put it in Munjmeta—'she lies alone on her mat and pines for him; she has no heart to take another lover.' Often she sleeps with a girl-friend who is herself in the arms of a boy, but she lies with her back to them, turning away from all that happiness. In Ulera they said that when a girl's lover leaves her, she cannot sing for many days. When the Mukhwan of Banjora died, the Mukhwanin's face was 'destroyed by sorrow'. 883X 836 152

Boys are often, but not always, more philosophical. 'Yes, for a month you feel wretched', said a chelik in Markabera. 'Then you forget all about it. One may be able to meet her again, but that is difficult and dangerous. But at least you can always get another girl in the ghotul.' Yet at Bopna the Silledar was called a 'widower', so miserable was he after his 'wife's' marriage last year. At Markabera, Dasru took to drink after his ghotul wife was married and Gurti, who was deeply attached to the beautiful and vivacious Mallo, looked very lonely and miserable when I saw him nearly a year after her marriage to a boy in another village.

It is remarkable, however, how few actual tragedies there have been from this cause. In the last ten years, only one case of suicide has been registered 883X 836 762

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as due to the separation of a chelik from his motiari. This occurred in 1932 and was, as we should expect, in a *jodidār* ghotul, at Amgaon in the Karangal Pargana. Chaitu and Munga—I do not know their ghotul titles—the boy about twenty years old and the girl about eighteen—were greatly attached to each other and dreaded the thought of separation. They each begged their parents to let them marry, but Munga's father was adamant and married her to Dasru of the Markabera ghotul, a different Dasru, of course, from the one

[31]

FIG. 60. Carving in the ghotul at Nayanar
Height 4½"

I have just mentioned. After the marriage she was taken to Markabera, where the chelik diverted themselves as usual by shutting her up with the new husband whom she did not love. Before she left Amgaon, she was taken round the village to say good-bye and every household made their contributions for the ghotul feast that would be held a week after the marriage.

When the time came, chelik and motiari went singing through the pretty wooded country that separates Amgaon from Markabera and invited Munga to the feast. Her husband could not refuse, though he must have known there was danger in Amgaon, but it was so near—only two miles away—that he let her go. When she reached her old home, she went to meet Chaitu in the lonely corner of a field; he had brought some liquor for her, and they sat down to have a farewell drink together. But a little girl, Chaitu's younger sister, followed them and ran to tell her father. He hurried to the spot, caught the two lovers

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together, and beat the boy, telling him that the girl was no longer his, and that such meetings would bring scandal upon them all. Behind those slaps how much one can see of parental exasperation over a long and troublesome intrigue, almost certainly parental envy of a son entranced by love, and the usual Muria dread of adultery—a very genuine sentiment.

Boy and girl ran away—I can see their quick Muria nature dissolved in tears and anger—and returned to the ghotul for the feast that sealed their separation. Munga had to massage every chelik after supper as a farewell rite, but then, when all was quiet, they crept together out of the ghotul to the woods. That night—it was 20 May 1932—they climbed onto the great branch of a mango tree, tied and adjusted ropes, and facing one another fell to death. When they were found, Chaitu had his hand upon his motiari's shoulder.

V

Although outwardly both types of ghotul are the same and often only the most careful investigation can distinguish them, the customs and atmosphere of the modern type are entirely distinct. Here everything is arranged to prevent long-drawn intense attachments, to eliminate jealousy and possessiveness, to deepen the sense of communal property and action. No chelik may regard a motiari as 'his'. There is no ghotul marriage, there are no ghotul partners. 'Everyone belongs to everyone else' in the very spirit of *Brave New World*. A chelik and motiari may sleep together for three nights; after that they are warned; if they persist they are punished. If a boy shows any signs of possessiveness for a particular girl, if his face falls when he sees her making love to someone else, if he gets annoyed at her sleeping with another chelik, should he be offended if she refuses to massage him and goes to someone else, he is forcibly reminded by his fellows that she is not his wife, he has no *haq* or right over her, she is the *māl* or property of the whole ghotul, and if he looks like that he will be punished.

This type of ghotul is sometimes called the *mundi-badaina* because in it you change from girl to girl just as you change your rings from finger to finger.

How is it that this type of ghotul has so widely displaced the classical *jodidār* dormitory? Why is the process of change from one type to the other continuing today? There are many reasons.

In the Bennr Pargana and at Koilibera I heard the phrase 'so that they will not be ruined by love'. This is certainly a genuine consideration. Too much love before marriage will mean too little after it. Sexual romance is not the best preparation for a life-long union. A strong and lasting attachment to a girl in the pre-nuptial period may lead to an elopement and an irregular marriage. Such a marriage disturbs the serenity of the home—which ultimately depends on the parents; it destroys the old alliances of families and prevents the repayment of ancient debts; it often turns out unsuccessful. In villages where several such elopements have occurred within a short time, the rules of the ghotul have been changed.

The modern rules are also intended as a contraceptive measure. The Muria believe that conception only occurs when the male and female remain together for a long period and enjoy an uninterrupted series of acts of coition with no divergence of interest. Both psychological and physical concentration in fidelity to a single partner is required for pregnancy.

A former Chalan of Golawand, for example, described how he consistently changed his ghotul partners and never made anyone pregnant; but two friends of his in the same ghotul slept every day with the same girls and impregnated

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way, though not always with the full ceremonial. Indeed a girl should be married to the boy she is engaged to—if he will have her—as soon as possible. At Kibi Belanga, for example, a Maravi boy, the Panda of the ghotul, used to have intercourse with a Maravi girl, and she became pregnant. The matter became known to the elders of the village who fined him and married the girl quickly to a Naitami boy of Kidir village to whom she was engaged. The child was born three months after marriage and was accepted by the husband. A few years ago in Hathipakna there was a scandal when the Malko, 'a daughter of Naitami', was made pregnant by the Jamadar, also a Naitami. They attempted an abortion, without success, but after the boy's father had paid twelve rupees, the Malko was married, by the reduced ceremonies, to a boy at Sodma.

The kindly, gentle Muria makes things as easy as possible for the young. 'Even an elephant with four legs sometimes stumbles.' 'What can you do to one who has missed the road?' But if the girl refuses to leave her lover, the matter becomes very serious, and both are outcasted. In Metawand, I was told that such people were never re-admitted into the tribe, and after death only the chelik would touch their bodies and take them to the pyre. If a *kutukal* was erected it would have to be apart from the others.

A few years ago, at Alor, a member of the Kuhrami clan eloped with a Kuhrami girl. They were condemned by the panchayat, but took no notice. For 'the mouth that desires its fill and the genitalia that are excited never listen to advice'. They are now living together at Hirri. No Muria will eat with them, and at festivals of the clan-god they get no share of the consecrated meat. If a son is born, he will be called Bhula Huwa, but he will not be regarded as outcaste. He will have all the tribal privileges denied his parents. 'For he was tied up in the bundle; he knew nothing of what was done.'

This rigorist attitude is not so much one of moral condemnation as due to a fear of the supernatural vengeance that may descend upon the whole clan. In some cases, the guilty pair are forgiven if they perform an elaborate ceremony and pay sufficient fines. For two years they have to wait. Then if the Gaita approves he takes them to a tank or stream. Near the bank they make a ring of stakes and build a little bamboo wall, covering it with grass and thatch, inside which the boy and girl are made to stand together. The grass is set on fire and as it blazes up they jump through the flames into the water. After bathing, they put on new clothes and throw the old ones into the water. They make suitable offerings to the gods and are henceforth free of their guilt.

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The general atmosphere of kindly tolerance probably accounts for the fact that so few tragedies have occurred. In the police records of the last ten years there are only two cases of suicide which arose out of clan-incest. The first was in January 1932. Chime and Kule of the Timri ghotul were of the same clan and in love with one another. The girl's parents married her to a boy called Jhola, from Supbeda, who had a wife already. She left him and it is said that she returned to the Timri ghotul and began to sleep there again. If this is true, it is remarkable in view of the normally strict taboo on married girls entering the ghotul. But all such rules are broken sometimes. After a time she was found to be pregnant but only after several months did the matter come to the ears of the village elders. When they questioned Chime about it, she took the hand of Kule and named him as the father of the unborn child. This was too much for him and on the night of 18 January, though he went to the ghotul as usual, when all were asleep he went quietly out and hanged himself.

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For months everyone must have known all about it. Before the girl's marriage Kule's breach of the clan laws was complete and open; it must constantly have been discussed in the ghotul, and the elders must have known of it. Yet until the day of the 'trial' it had never been openly proclaimed in the village that he had offended against the laws of the tribe. That was too much for him, he saw his girl lost to him, a life-long shame, and heavy penalties. So he killed himself.

FIG. 114. Carved tobacco-box from Metawand
Height 2¾″

There was another case in 1936 in Kerawahi when a chelik and motiari[1] who belonged to the same clan fell in love with one another. They often used to slip outside the ghotul at night and sleep together. After a time the girl found herself pregnant. When the matter became known, there was a great scandal and the elders announced that they would hold a panchayat. The boy was so ashamed and so afraid of paying the fine that was certain to be inflicted, that he hanged himself. The girl was afterwards married to another boy, but was punished—the people said—by excessive menorrhagia. She grew thinner and thinner, and after a year her husband left her and married someone else.

IX

I have heard of very few cases of incest between near relatives. In spite of all the joking, in spite also of the close proximity in which near relatives grow up together in the ghotul, I think that the rules are kept. On the rare occasions that they are broken, the act is regarded with severe censure. At Sahimunda a girl was made pregnant by her own *māma*, her mother's brother. She publicly accused him and he was fined. In Adenga, a Muria kept his own father's junior wife. He was excommunicated and banned from all tribal privileges. He and the woman were not even allowed to get water from the usual place. I am told that he is never to be admitted into the tribe. In the same village the Gaita kept his mother's sister, and was excommunicated.

A tale of incest from Kapsi is obviously satirical and hardly suggests approval of what was done.

> Long ago there lived an old man who married his son to a very lovely girl. When she came to his house the father at once fell in love with her. He sent his old wife and son to another village to get rice, and that evening he himself pretended to get high fever and lay groaning on his bed. The poor daughter-in-law came to him and said, 'What can I do for you?' He said, 'Ask the Departed in the granary what they want you to do'. She went to them and asked, 'What can I do for my

[1] According to the police report, the chelik was Loti, son of Dhanaji, and the motiari was Koli, daughter of Bhimanna. Loti was Koli's paternal uncle. I do not know their ghotul titles.

THE PROBLEM OF GHOTUL INFERTILITY

Sometimes, indeed, the chelik actually try to make a girl pregnant. In Kanhargaon, two very popular motiari were betrothed to boys at Nayanar. The Kanhargaon chelik did all they could to make them pregnant so that they could force them into marriage and keep them in their own village. But they were unsuccessful, and in the end one of the girls was seduced by her own betrothed at a marriage, became pregnant and was hastily married to him. It is not uncommon, though I have no statistics on the point, for engaged couples whose parents unduly delay their marriage to force the issue either by eloping together or by trying to achieve a pregnancy.

But on the whole, the admirable ghotul rule that engaged couples should have nothing to do with one another before marriage is carefully observed. Out of 113 Lamhada boys serving for their wives and in close proximity for several years to the girls they were going to marry, only 5 made them pregnant.

Pre-nuptial pregnancy does not seem to injure the couple's relationships in marriage, provided a youth marries the girl himself. Of the 26 chelik who married the motiari they made pregnant, not one made a failure of his domestic life. At the time of my inquiries every one of them was living with his original partner and very happy with her. But those who had infertile sexual connexion with their wives before marriage showed a comparatively high divorce rate. Of the 316 who admitted to this, 14 had unsuccessful marriages. Of these 77 were the regular ghotul-wives of my informants and 68 of them were still living together when I inquired.

In only three cases during the last twenty years has a pregnancy been taken so seriously as to lead to tragedy. Two of these were the suicides which I have already described in Chapter XV. But here it was not so much the pregnancy itself as the fact that the pregnancy was the result of a connexion between chelik and motiari of the same clan that mattered. The third tragedy appears to have been due largely to a chelik's fear of the disgrace and expense, especially as it was his second experience of the kind.

At the beginning of April 1942, Birjhu, a chelik of the Aturbera ghotul, discovered with dismay that his motiari, Mori, was pregnant. Only a year before he had made another girl pregnant in the ghotul, had refused to marry her and had forced his parents to pay compensation. They did so, but they made many threats as to what they would do if it occurred again. Mori, who seems to have been in love with the boy, said that he must marry her, but Birjhu refused and said that if she told anybody that it was through him that she had conceived, he would kill her. After a little while, however, the poor girl told her brother's wife about it. When Birjhu heard she had done so, he planned to carry out his threat. On the night of the 14th of April, he told Mori he would do what she wanted and they had better elope together and get married in another village. Late at night they crept stealthily out of the ghotul and made their way through the forest. But suddenly, before they had gone very far, Birjhu caught hold of the girl and strangled her. Then he dragged her body below a tree and tied a rope round the neck to make it look as though the girl had committed suicide.

The following day a report was made at the Narayanpur police station that Mori had committed suicide. When Birjhu heard that the matter had gone to the police, he was frightened but possibly even more he was overwhelmed with sorrow and misery at what he had done. He disappeared, and two days later hanged himself from a tree in the jungle.

But this is the only incident of the kind that has yet been recorded.

Such is the general picture, familiar to students of pre-marital freedom everywhere. How are we to explain the fact that through all the years of

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This may sound hard, but unless parents insisted I doubt if the ghotul could continue. The orderly life of the tribe would be destroyed. After a betrothal a girl belongs already to her future husband's clan; she may attend his clan festivals and should avoid his, and not her own, totem. An engagement is not a mere contract between individuals; it is an alliance of families and clans, affecting even the Departed.

Serious difficulties are not common. Occasionally a man may have an experience like that of Kunjami Gudra of Chaniyagaon.

> While I was a little boy I was betrothed to a girl in Korpar village. Two years afterwards I went with the other chelik of Chaniyagaon to Jungani for the Pus Kolang dance. There I met the Nirosa of that ghotul, and fell in love with her. When she came with the other girls to dance the Diwali dances in our village, I was able to make love to her.
>
> Then I was married, but I did not care for my wife. Soon after the marriage I went to work at Jungani and stayed in the ghotul for some days. Now my love for the Nirosa grew much stronger. She told me she was betrothed to a boy in Gorma, but I persuaded her, and shortly after I returned home, she came to my house. I said, 'Why have you come?' She replied, 'For *paisa-mundi*, for money and a ring'.
>
> My first wife left me, but did her best to plague me with magic. One day she sent a black cobra to attack me. Another day as I was returning from the Dhanora bazaar—where my first wife lived—a tiger (sent by her) chased me up a tree. But with my second wife, I am living very happily.

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Out of the 20 suicides committed by Muria of the north during the past ten years only two were the result of parental interference in their children's love affairs. I have described one of these cases on page 416 and I will give the other here, for it is relevant to our discussion.

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In 1933 Budha of Bayalpur arranged a marriage between his son Malsai and Ghasnin, the daughter of Liti of Korhabera. They were both then young children. Each grew up in their separate ghotul, and Ghasnin began to accompany the older girls on the Diwali dances. The motiari of Korhabera go to Honawandi and the chelik of Honawandi go for the Dandar dances to Korhabera. Gradually Ghasnin herself became a leader of the motiari. In 1940 she became very friendly with Dawari of Honawandi, and they decided to marry. One evening Ghasnin begged her mother to allow this, but she refused. The next day, Ghasnin ran away to Honawandi and was married to Dawari that very night, the chelik and motiari of the ghotul there assisting at the wedding. Next morning, her elder brother arrived and angrily forced her to come home. On the way she escaped and ran through the jungle back to her husband. But her brother came again and forcibly took her home. Her parents decided to hand her over to the parents of Malsai, her betrothed. But because she was married and in love, and because Malsai was an undersized diseased boy, she was in despair. On the morning of 18 January 1941 she escaped from the house and drowned herself in the village tank.

In both these incidents, the sense of obligation to the official 'legal' partner is worthy of remark. Gudra had to quiet his conscience by persuading himself that his first wife was a witch; Ghasnin allowed herself to be taken from her husband's house, and seems to have accepted as inevitable her re-marriage to Malsai.

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second after a time. In 6 other cases a plural marriage was in progress, but was unhappy and disturbed by constant quarrels. 595

Polygyny is not socially disapproved—though an incidence of only 2 per cent might suggest it was. The Muria's attitude is rather that a man has undertaken more than he is likely to be able to manage, and is more to be pitied for his difficulties than to be condemned for impropriety.

For example, at Berma, a Muria said, 'Two wives are like two drums with the player in between; he beats one or he beats both according to the rhythm required. But a good drummer does his best with a single drum'. Or again at Kanhargaon they said, 'You will always hear the noise of pots clashing and breaking in a house with two wives; nothing is done properly, not even rice is cooked in time'. And the Kandki of Bunagaon said, 'I am dried up even by one wife. How could I manage another?' But elsewhere I have heard it said that a clever man can keep two wives happy 'just as two hands beat the two ends of a drum in rhythm'.

It is everywhere said that the wives quarrel, not through sexual jealousy or about prestige, but because each thinks the other shirks her due share of work. As I show later in the chapter this question of the distribution of work is very important to the Muria mind and is indeed the cause of most of the quarrels and a high percentage of the suicides in Muria society. [578 762]

For example, in the following record of a quarrel it is the dispute about work that is really important. A husband has been neglecting his senior wife. 'Is my vagina bitter and hers so sweet?' she says and then turns on the junior. 'You *bitloti*, it is I who made this man what he is today: everything in the house is mine; all you should eat is my leavings.' The younger girl replies, 'I didn't come here of my own accord: he is as much my husband as yours, for it is he who brought us both here'. Then the husband says to the elder, 'Don't be angry. I have brought this girl, not because I love her more than you, but so that she can help you in your work'. 'But that is what she never does. When I am cooking, she should fetch wood, when I am defiled, she should cook. But she refuses.' The younger wife, in some villages, has to observe various vital taboos. She cannot approach the Pot of the Departed at will. She can only go at the New Eating Festivals after an offering has been made and a feast enjoyed. Before this she should not take any grain to the place where the Pot is kept. [784]

In the sexual sphere it is supposed to be comparatively easy to manage two or even three wives.[1] The headman of Chandabera, a charming man with the body of an athlete, told me how he arranged that he himself and each of his two wives slept in three different places. Then he made love to one or the other according to his desire, not much caring whether the other was awake and watching or no. On this point, he said, he never had trouble. In Badgaon, a Muria said that he had to have his senior wife three times a day and the junior twice in order to stop them fighting over his body—but this was doubtless an exaggeration.

I will quote some of the remarks made by these sexual athletes during the statistical inquiry.

A Sirdar of Kejang: 'I did not care for my first wife: I married her at my parents' wish, and they were more interested in marrying a rich man's daughter

[1] In many tribes, leading 'characters' take pride in keeping a number of wives. A Maria of the Oyami clan in Kanapur had six wives; in Kerlapal another Maria had seven. I found a Juang in Keonjhar State with seven. The famous Yogi Baiga of Mandla had six, with twenty-six children. A Pardhan of Balaghat had a similar number and used to take them all, walking behind him in a file, when he went to a bazaar.

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will be ruined'. Or a father says to his son, 'I spit on your ghotul friends; all you can do is to dance and sing; you have no idea of how to work; when I tell you to do some work you always have a pain in the stomach. When you see a plough you at once get fever, but when you hear a drum your pains and fever disappear at once'.

At Jhakri Raunu gave us some examples of how angry parents talk to their children. Here is a mother telling her daughter what she thinks of her: 'You *futkhi*, why can't you work? If you don't begin to use your limbs now, what will you do later?' And the girl replies, 'Why are you always bothering me? If you don't want to give me food, don't; if I have got to starve, I will starve, or I will go away and beg'. Then the father joins in: 'After you are married you are going to ruin our name; you will go changing from husband to husband, for not one will put up with your idleness; and everywhere you go people will laugh at us. Has not your mother taught you to do anything but to dance in the ghotul? Must you spend all your life in the ghotul? You cannot even cook the rice properly.'

In the same way the mother says to the son, 'Why can't you go to the fields? Why can't you look after the bullocks? Your one desire is to eat without moving your limbs; your hands and feet are broken. Yet this is your own house; this is your own property; how are you going to look after it when we are dead? How are you going to bury us properly if you never do any work?'

But the Muria believe that the mother is generally very kind and loving to her son. As Nari said at Nayanar, 'The father is always saying to himself that the girl is going to leave him and go to her husband's house and therefore he is tender to her, but the mother does not seem to mind her going away. She thinks of her own reputation. Unless she is nasty to the girl, she cannot teach her anything and so she has to nag her continually'.

These quarrels about work lead, in a few rare cases, to the serious consequence of suicide. During the past ten years there have been 20 suicides among the Muria of the ghotul area, and a study of the causes leading to them confirms what I have written in this chapter. The suicides have been due to the following causes.

Cause of Suicide	Number	Percentage
Insanity	2	10
Sickness	3	15
Fear due to breach of tribal rules ..	1	5
Fear of prosecution	1	5
Conflict with parents over marriage ..	2	10
Sorrow for the death of a son	1	5
Quarrel over childlessness	1	5
Quarrels about work	9	45

This is a very small number of suicides, only 2 a year, for so large a population, working out at about 20 to the million annually. The method of suicide, in every case but one, was hanging; the single exception was the young wife who drowned herself at Korhabera.

The suicides due to quarrels and disputes number 12, or 60 per cent. This, which would be surprising in other communities, is less so here in view of what we have seen of the sense of outrage that a quarrel gives to a Muria.

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I will give a few case-histories to illustrate this. Ghasia was a Lamhada boy. He went to dance at a tribal festival and on his return was violently abused by his 'father-in-law' for neglecting his work. He went out and hanged himself.

Karu of Todopal was a lazy, ill-tempered youth. One day his father abused him. 'You *mailotia*, I have fed you all your life; when will you start feeding me? All you can do is to sit about and eat' and doubtless a lot more. The boy lost his temper; there was a violent quarrel; he rushed out of the house and hanged himself on a mango tree.

Sukta was a fifteen-year-old chelik of Baghbera. In October 1931 he was beaten by his father for allowing the cattle to get into the *bāri*-enclosure and spoil the green chillies growing there. The boy ran away and hanged himself on a tamarind tree just outside the village.

Bbadu, a Muria of about 30 years, was the youngest of four brothers living together at Burbal. The eldest, Rupji, had to take his wife to a Siraha for treatment. This usually takes time; it is expensive, and involves a lot of drinking. After a few days Rupji came home in a rage and found his brothers had been neglecting the field-work in his absence. He quarrelled violently with them and was so upset that that night he hanged himself with his own turban from a mahua tree near the house.

Kaharu, a man of about 35, was a habitual drunkard. He worked for a Mussalman settled in the village, Dhoundai. One evening in July 1940 he got his wages and went to the liquor shop. When he returned home drunk, his wife scolded him for spending all their money on liquor and for doing no work. He got angry, beat her, and went back to drink again. His wife followed him quarrelling violently. Kaharu took her home and hit her with his axe. She managed to escape, but Kaharu being very drunk thought he had killed her and hanged himself with one of her cloths in front of the house.

Sukaro, a middle-aged Muria woman of Killam, is described in the police reports as thin-skinned and hot-tempered, suffering from an ulcer on the left knee that did not make her any more amiable. One day when she was supposed to be watching the standing crops she went to another village. Her husband made a great to-do about her neglect of her work, and she got so angry that she hanged herself.

Dhonya was a young chelik of about 15 belonging to the Kurasnar ghotul, who did not get on well with his father. So constantly did they quarrel that at last the boy went to Jodenga to live with his uncle. A month later the father followed him and abused him publicly, saying that he had become a vagabond and would do anything but work. The boy got very angry, refused to eat and went out with his bow and arrows. But he only went as far as the Thanagudi. A few minutes later the father followed and found him hanging from a beam inside the building. He cut him down at once, but the boy was dead.

The apparent cause of suicide in these cases seems trivial enough at first sight. I have little doubt, however, that deeper reasons were usually present. The triviality of motive so often advanced by the villagers who report these tragedies is really a screen to protect the real significance of the deed from official or merely inquisitive eyes. In the majority of cases, also, psycho-neurotic or psychotic symptoms have been recognised by the people themselves. So deeply rooted is the faith in work and its equal distribution that a public rebuke on such a subject is an insult not to be borne and suicide is

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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less the expression of outraged temper than a final and complete protest against a loss of dignity.[1]

It must not be supposed that because quarrels arise over work, chelik and motiari are slack or lazy. They are in fact singularly laborious and the disputes about work stand out because they occur against a background of a very high tradition of industry.

It is very rare that these quarrels end in murder. One day at the end of the rains in 1932, Kodu came home tired and hungry from the fields. His elder brother's wife, Babe, had only got *jāwa* ready for him: he demanded rice, and she retorted that 'since his arms and legs were not broken, he might cook his food himself'. He replied that as long as there was a woman in the house he was not going to do woman's work and he gave her such a severe beating that she died after a few days.

Balsai, a former Chalki of the Umargaon ghotul, lost his temper with his wife Rupoti because though he had a bad throat and cough, she cooked the irritating *dhoba* vegetable for him. He was drunk at the time and gave her a heavy blow with a wooden stool. When I saw him in jail he said that he loved his wife—'it was a mistake, not from my heart'—and that she often visited him in dreams.

Bandi (a thin big-eyed youth, formerly the Kajanchi of Kanera) had two wives. He too quarrelled with them over food. He came hungry and there was nothing ready. He got out his razor and said he was going to kill them. The elder wife ran away, but he gave two deep cuts on the arm and belly of his younger wife. She survived, but was in hospital for months.[2]

I have seen only one record of murder on account of a wife's infidelity. Manglu was the former Kandki of the Amgaon ghotul and his wife had been the Manjaro of the same ghotul. But the girl did not like him and, it is said, would never give herself to him. She ran away twice to the house of a lover at Bamhot. The second time a group of people went to fetch her back. As they were returning at night they met Manglu and handed the girl over to him. He gave her a very severe beating then and there in the forest, and a week later she died. Manglu was sentenced to two years' imprisonment.

X. The Vocabulary of Abuse

The Muria's vocabulary of abuse is meagre and unenterprising compared to that of other aboriginal tribes. Perhaps we ought not to regret this; it may be a sign of the genial and pacific temper of the people that they put so little of their imagination and colour into their swearing. But I sometimes think that their continual use of one standard and now almost meaningless expression has dulled their inventive powers.

This expression, as common as the English 'bloody' and as meaningless, is the universal *sisilotia*. This is a Halbi word meaning 'to lie with your mother', but very few of those who use it so freely intend seriously to suggest that an act of incest has occurred or could occur. Indeed, the way all meaning has been drained from the expression is clearly seen in the fact that a mother can apply it to her own daughter. Girls shout it at other girls, aunts at their nieces, grandmothers at their granddaughters. There is certainly no Lesbian suggestion here; it probably simply implies 'you are capable of anything'.

[1] For a full discussion of this subject, see my book *Maria Murder and Suicide* (Bombay, 1943).

[2] The elder wife had been the Salan of Sabapal, the younger Belosa of Metawand. Both marriages were regular, the first arranged by the parents, the second a love-match. Bandi said the two girls got on very well together.

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
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but with a great variety of turns and changes: the 'bison' charge and fight each other, pick up rings or leaves on the points of their horns, and chase the girl dancers. The girls, each with a dancing-stick in her right hand, form a long line and go round and through the men dancers with many different movements and steps. They do not usually sing, and indeed the tune would be lost in the thunder of the drums. As they go, they beat the ground with their sticks *dum-dum-dum, di-dum, dum-dum.* Masked mummers, clowns dressed in straw, naked acrobats with enormous imitation genitalia, add to the gaiety of the scene. There is no finer dance in India.

The head-dress of bison horns is the chief treasure of a Maria home. It is kept with the utmost care, dismantled, in closed bamboo baskets, and it takes nearly an hour to assemble it. Horns are rare nowadays in Bastar and have to be imported from Jeypore. A Maria may give a bull in exchange for a pair of good horns; they should be white at the bottom turning to black half way up.

A bamboo frame forms the base of the head-dress. The horns are attached to the front and a great tuft of feathers rises behind. Cloth, often old and costly silk, is tied round and round and a tail hangs down behind. Across the front a fringe of cloth adorned with cowries covers the dancer's eyes.

The feathers used are those of the peacock and of domestic cocks specially castrated for the purpose. It is considered unlucky for a feather to fall to the ground during a dance, and before they begin the dancers address the Earth Mother and the Ancestors: 'Save us from the dangers of magic and let none of the feathers fall'.

A man's head-dress passes to his son or brother's son after his death. His bow and arrow and his drum are also heirlooms and are highly valued. The loss of a head-dress drove one Maria youth to suicide, and a dispute about possession of an outfit of buttocks-bells led another to murder.

In the north of the area, many Maria dance both with bison horns and in Hill Maria fashion. The latter wear the skirt, decorated cap and streamers, and buttocks-bells characteristic of the Abujhmar Hills.

The Maria are not very good at musical instruments. They use a small fiddle called kikir, a Jews-harp made of iron or

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
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674 of his god, took up the trident and chain and stabbed his brother twice in the chest, and so killed him.

There are only 4 cases of murder by throttling in the 100 under review, and it is remarkable that 3 of these occurred within 9 months of one another during the year 1933. The first was on 6 January near Nakulnar, the second on 21 February at Garmiri and the third on 3 August at Kaurgaon. Moreover, in each case the homicide tried to disguise his murder as a suicide by stringing the corpse of his victim to a tree. The first two villages in which these events occurred are close together and the third within gossip distance, and it is obvious that a sort of epidemic of murder by throttling spread among the people and then disappeared.[1]

V

THE STATISTICS OF SUICIDE

762 In any discussion of violent crime among aboriginals the light thrown by a consideration of suicide must not be ignored. Murder is to the Maria almost a kind of suicide, for discovery is generally inevitable but a man may willingly ruin his life provided at the same time he destroys his enemy. The Maria, as Table Nine shows, are more prone to suicide just as they are more prone to murder than the other tribesmen, and obviously the light hold that life has upon them and their impetuous and passionate temperament is the cause in either 674 762 case. The reasons for murder or suicide sometimes coincide, and it is interesting to see how one type of personality reacts to a given situation by killing someone else and another type by killing himself. For example, it was a dispute about

[1] Adam gives an account of unusual methods of murder in the hill areas of Europe. 'In mountainous and other districts where the inhabitants are often endowed with exceptional strength and exceptional brutality, strange things sometimes happen. One day a woodcutter in the midst of a quarrel seized a large piece of wood over nine feet long, part of a tree which he had just cut down, and holding it in front of him like a ram rushed on his assailants, inflicting no fewer than five serious wounds (fracture of ribs, fracture of collar bone, dislocation of hip joint). In a quarrel in a tavern a young man of gigantic height seized the heavy top of the inn table and brandishing it in the air brought it down on the heads of the young men who were fighting with him, inflicting a dozen grave wounds on the skull'. —J. C. Adam, *Criminal Investigation* (London, 1934), p. 420.

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
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possession of a dancing outfit that led Wango to murder his betrothed Paike. But when Alami Mata had his splendid bison-horn head-dress, which he loved and cared for with devotion, stolen he did not seek out and kill the thief but was so miserable that he hanged himself. In several cases disputes about the right of a girl to visit her mother's house led to murder. In as many others it led to suicide. Sometimes a girl hangs herself because she is not allowed to go home. Sometimes the husband hangs himself out of loneliness and misery when his wife deserts him for her parents. A public insult caused Marvi Hinga to murder his mother-in-law. Had he been of a different temperament like Markami Pandu, who was abused and insulted by his wife for not working properly, he would have hanged himself. Fatigue drives some Maria to murder in a fit of exhausted rage, but others hang themselves instead.

Some sick people murder the magician who they believe has sent affliction upon them. Others commit suicide in order to escape from him. The Maria themselves identify homicide and suicide in so far that both lead to a violent disturbance of village life. Both involve them in various supernatural dangers, and the ghosts of both can be dealt with in much the same way.

R. S. Cavan discusses the relations of widow suicide and human sacrifice. The voluntary sacrifice of widows at the funerals of their husbands has been recorded in India and China, throughout the central portion of Negro Africa and among certain aristocratic American Indian tribes. These areas are also the areas of human sacrifice.

> In the Orient the sacrifices are a matter of history and are often recorded as accompanying the widow suicide. Among the preliterates, the sacrifices were noted in conjunction with the suicides by early white observers. Moreover, in few parts of the world was human sacrifice found except in the groups which also had Sati. Human sacrifice and Sati went hand in hand.[1]

The Maria do not have the custom of widow suicide, and human sacrifice is equally rare among them.

I will begin, as in the case of the homicides, with general statistics about suicide in Bastar during the last 10 years.

[1] R. S. Cavan, *Suicide* (Chicago, 1928), p. 72

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
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TABLE NINE

Number of suicides in Bastar in 10 years, 1931-40

Tribe or Caste	Number of Cases	Annual average of suicides to the million[1]
Bison-horn Maria ...	93	53·14
Ghotul Muria ...	22	22·00
Others (whole State) ...	130	36·11
Total ...	245	38·58

It is notable again that the highest figure is for the Bison-horn Maria and the lowest for the Ghotul Muria. The Muria, however, are more prone to suicide than murder, which is perhaps what we might expect from a tribe so singularly free of jealousy and passion.

TABLE TEN

Methods of suicides used by all tribes and castes (245 cases)

By cutting the throat	1
By hanging	214
By drowning	15
By poisoning	9
By means not fully reported	6

Every case, except one of drowning, of aboriginal suicide in Bastar has been by hanging. This may be due to the fact that the people are not adept at poisons—murder by poison is very rare among them—and because there are few wells in aboriginal villages, and the tanks and streams where they get their water are fairly shallow.

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It is said that in India generally, drowning is the most common method of achieving suicide, and then hanging. In England, hanging comes first, then poisoning, then cutting the throat, and lastly drowning. In India men resort to hanging and drowning in about equal numbers but six out of seven

[1] Based on the population estimates of 1941.

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
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female suicides prefer drowning.[1] But this is not so among the Maria. One woman preferred to hang herself even on the very banks of the Indrawati, though the deep waters of the river were at hand.

In the 50 cases of which I have detailed information, 19 suicides were committed inside a building, 16 of them inside the dwelling-place of the family. In 7 other cases death occurred near the house. In the other 24 cases the suicide took place in the jungle, a rope or cloth being attached to the branch of a tree. Among trees the mahua (*Bassia latifolia*, Roxb.) was the most popular with 6 cases, and after it the mango with 3. Otherwise there is a very great variety in the trees selected for this gloomy purpose; there do not seem to be any taboos observed, though I notice the sacred saja (*Terminalia tomentosa*, W. & A.) is not used—but this may be for the entirely practical reason that it does not have suitable overhanging branches.

The method of self-execution seems to be to climb up the tree, to attach and arrange the cord and then jump down. When the suicide occurs inside a house, the person stands on a fish-trap or basket and kicks it away. In many cases, the rope consists of the victim's own loin-cloth, turban or sari, but several different kinds of rope are also used. Rope made of the twisted siari (*Baukinia vahlii*, W. & A.) creeper is perhaps the most common. Jute cords for tethering cattle, and ropes made of various kinds of bark are also used.

TABLE ELEVEN

Analysis of 50 Maria suicides by sex

Men	26
Women	24

The contrast between homicide and suicide in respect of the sex-ratio is very striking; 5 per cent stands against 48 per cent. There may be many reasons for this, chiefly that

[1] R. Ramkhodas and D. K. Thakore, *The Law of Crimes* (Bombay, 1911), p. 601, in the author's comment on Section 309 of the Indian Penal Code. But in the U.S.A., the order is said to be—for men—firearms, hanging, poisonous gas, corrosives, and—for women—gas, corrosives, firearms, drowning. In Japan, hanging first and then drowning are the favourite methods for both sexes.

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
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762 a woman ought not to kill and often lacks the means of killing —she does not usually learn to be expert with the bow and arrow or with the axe. It is possible that some of the suicides would have been murder, had there been the means and opportunity.

The suicide sex-ratio is remarkable when compared to the situation elsewhere. In Europe and America, there has been over a long period of years a far less equal ratio, varying from one woman to every three or five men. That these figures do vary suggests, however, that 'the propensity of men to commit suicide is probably not inherent in their sex, a conclusion further supported by figures for the Orient. For instance, [171] in Japan the proportion of women who commit suicide is much higher than for Europe or America. The situation in India is yet more at variance with the relations noted for the Occident'.[1]

TABLE TWELVE

Analysis of 50 Maria suicides by age

Under 15	1
Between 15 and 20	12
Between 20 and 25	9
Between 25 and 30	1
30 and over	5
40 and over	8
50 and over	8
Age not specified	6

There is not anything significant in the above Table except that we should notice that nearly half the suicides were of young people. The older men and women, by the time they have reached some position of dignity in the tribe, have consolations that help them to cling to life. Many of the suicides of the older people are due to insanity and intolerable disease believed to be the result of witchcraft.

[1] Cavan, op. cit., p. 308.

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
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TABLE THIRTEEN

762

Analysis of 50 Maria suicides by the time of year

January	3
February	5
March	3
April	2
May	3
June	4
July	6
August	7
September	2
October	3
November	7
December	5

Here again there is nothing very significant, probably because there are not sufficient figures to indicate large variations. But we may note that July and August, which are the most gloomy months of the rains, months also that are filled with heavy and exacting work, show the largest number of suicides. If we take the figures for homicide and suicide together the highest figures are shown by July and August, and then again by October and November.

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
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000 precautions he takes against the ghost, while the very fact—which Briffault mentions—that suicide can be made a deadly weapon against an enemy indicates what a serious business it is.

762 For the Maria of Bastar, suicide is a wretched deed; it certainly has no higher, hallowing significance; but it is no light or trivial matter due to lack of foresight. Rather it is caused by an all too clear vision of the future: the leper looks across a wilderness of ever-deepening misery; the widow sees her whole life shadowed by irreparable loss; wife or husband see their home's happiness wrecked about them; a man sees his future darkened by the memory of an unforgiveable insult. The people themselves have no desire to glorify the deed, neither do they condemn it. In perhaps the majority of cases psychoneurotic or psychotic symptoms have been recognized by the people themselves, and they regard the unhappy victims as driven to death by their own disordered minds.

The following Table gives the reasons for suicide among all tribes and castes for the 245 incidents in the last 10 years. The classification is one made by the police.

TABLE FIFTEEN

Reasons for suicide in 245 cases in Bastar State

Insanity	20
Disease	52
Leprosy	6
Grief on account of bereavement	17
Love-affairs	11
Quarrels over property	3
Quarrels between wife and husband	55
Other domestic quarrels	43
Fear of scandal	11
Intoxication	1
Economic: starvation and financial ruin	3
Fear of courts and officials	3
Bad treatment by employers	2
Failing in a school examination	1
Not properly reported	17

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When we turn to the 50 sample cases (details of which are given in an Appendix) we find the following. 762

TABLE SIXTEEN

Reasons for suicide in 50 Maria cases

Insanity	7
Disease and fear of magic	9
Grief and loneliness	4
Fear of officials	2
Regret for harsh behaviour to someone loved ...	3
Resentment at a rebuke	7
An intolerable home	4
Antagonism between wife and husband	9
Intoxication	1
Economic causes	1
Special cases	3

There is no evidence for supposing any of the suicides were due to a desire for 'identification with the dead', although in one case a youth slept all night before his death in the granary where the sacred Pot of the Dead was kept. Nor is the desire for revenge specially evident, though it may, of course, have been concealed from the authorities. No doubt the feeling that one's death will cause trouble to one's relatives and so pay them out is often present in suicides that are due to temper. Not one case appears to have been due to sexual jealousy, though several were due to sexual disappointment. The majority seem to have been caused by a desire to escape from a physical or domestic situation that had become intolerable. The insult, as in other primitive cultures, is a very potent stimulus to suicide. This too creates an intolerable situation from which escape is necessary, but I do not notice any stress on the protest which a death makes against those who have done harm.

Suicide has been studied with some care among the Indian tribes of North America. The older view was that it was exceptional among primitive people. Thus Hrdlicka says that it was rare on the San Carlos reservation, "infrequent" among the Jicarillas: 'among the Navaho rare instances occur from destitution, despondency or drink'. Among the Papago, Pima, Zuni and other tribes suicide 171

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and men sought to avoid physical suffering, either martyrdom or blood revenge; some cases involve loss of status . . . Avoidance remains the dominating motive of Iroquois suicide."[1]

Suicide among the Trobriand Islanders, says Malinowski, 'is certainly not a means of administering justice, but it affords the accused and oppressed one—whether he be guilty or innocent—a means of escape and rehabilitation. It looms large in the psychology of the natives, is a permanent damper on any violence of language or behaviour, on any deviation from custom or tradition, which might hurt or offend another. Thus suicide, like sorcery, is a means of keeping the native to the strict observance of the law, a means of preventing people from extreme and unusual types of behaviour. Both are pronounced conservative influences and as such are strong supports of law and order'.[2]

This is a little too emphatic for the situation in Bastar, but duly modified might apply there also. But whatever primitive suicide may be, it is not trivial. Nor is it altogether dishonourable. The man insulted escapes, it is true, but he restores his honour. The girl forced into an unwelcome marriage runs away from it, but she preserves her dignity and prestige.

[1] W. N. Fenton, *Iroquois Suicide*, Bureau of American Ethnology: Anthropological Papers, Washington, 1941, p. 134.
[2] B. Malinowski, *Crime and Custom in Savage Society* (London, 1932), p. 98.

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
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754 that his wife did not bear him a child, he went to the Waddai who discovered the real reason, performed the proper rites and soon a large family came into being.

754 Witches can injure women by prolonging their menstrual
755 periods. The Siraha can counter this by offering sacrifices
841 to the Dead and to the Mirchuk. In Kameli a woman who was suffering from mennhorragia was cured by this means.

[762] But sometimes the Siraha can do nothing, and in despair the unhappy woman may hang herself.

754 At Bergum I was told that only widows can perform black magic and that they usually call on the ghosts of the dead to help them in their wicked deeds. Here they gave me an interesting account of how a witch can take precautions against discovery. She takes her familiar, say the ghost of a murderer or suicide, with her to an ant-hill and there she 'binds its mouth' by removing some of the earth from the hill and uttering charms. She says to the ghost, 'When the Siraha questions you, do not disclose my name'. Then she replaces the earth. It is believed that, just as any earth that is removed from an ant-hill is automatically filled up the next day, so misfortune will enter the house of the ghost she has bound if it betrays her.

[75]
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Charm against disease, made of small bits of chicken-bone.

Dread of this witchcraft or enchantment is a very powerful factor driving men to violence, for the fear is still a live one and the dangers are supposed to be great. Guma Hunga left his home and village because he believed that his family was being bewitched by a man called Burgi. A year afterwards he saw his enemy in the new village to which he had moved, and murdered him in a sudden access

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infect the food magically, but in a special place where only she herself would have access to it. This she refused to do.[1] She was also trying, he said, to have him out-casted for some moral offence. But the nature of this was not made clear in evidence.

The Court decided that Chappe was undoubtedly at the time of the murder a sick and unbalanced person. Although on that very day every able-bodied man in the village had gone out on a ceremonial hunt, Chappe did not feel well enough to do so, a clear sign that he considered himself in a serious condition. It is probable that a number of factors combined to bring about the tragedy. The very fact of being unable to attend the great occasion of the hunt must have been depressing. His wife had refused him access to her for several days. It is more than likely that he attributed his illness to someone's tampering with his food. At last the accumulated frustration and anxiety exploded within him, and murder was the result.

VI

MAGIC AND SUICIDE

762 In some cases, the torment of disease, the fear of the sinister and hostile magic causing it, and the failure of the magicians to effect a cure, led—not to the murder of the sorcerer or of the doctor—but to the suicide of the patient. The reason why all this misery resulted in suicide rather than murder is generally evident: the suicides were so wretched and so weak that it was impossible for them either to protect themselves against their supernormal enemies or to revenge themselves upon the human representatives of an unhappy fate.

For example, Markami Hunga suffered from yaws. She was old and covered with ulcers, unable to eat for pain and misery. One night, when all were asleep, she hanged herself from a rafter of her house.

Atami Kosa, a Maria of Poyali, had a septic ulcer on his left calf. Sori Hirma of Korra got very drunk at a harvest festival and dislocated his hip. For eighteen months he lay

[1] A similar delusion drove a Dhurwa of Darbha to commit suicide in 1939. He believed that his wife was poisoning his food, and he used to wait till she went to work in the fields when he would stealthily go into the house and get what food he could.

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
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in his house, pulling himself up by a rope tied to the roof. 762
But at last he could bear it no longer and managed to hang himself with the very rope that had been so long his friend.

Menstrual troubles are always due to the magic of a jealous 762
woman, usually a frustrated and malicious widow. The 841
catamenial period in any case is regarded as a time of contagious danger and taboo, and any irregularity is sufficient to cause a strong psychotic disturbance.[1] Karti Sukri, a young girl of only fifteen years, apparently suffered from menorrhagia; she bore it for six months and then hanged herself with her own cloth from a mahua tree near her home. Markami Kosi had been married for twenty years, but she suffered acutely during menstruation—'the pain was so great she behaved as if she were mad'—and she too committed suicide. As is often the case when a woman suffers from menstrual troubles, the husband had married a second wife and I have little doubt that the jealousy and annoyance inevitable in a polygynous household played its part in hastening Markami Kosi's death. The younger wife, however, did her best to save the other woman; she cut her down while still breathing and tried to revive her.

In all these cases, matters were made worse by the failure 762
of the magicians to effect a cure. This naturally added fear and depression to the physical suffering of the patient. Whenever the Siraha is found helpless, an atmosphere of deep gloom and apprehension is created: the supernatural powers arrayed against the sufferer take on a new majesty and horror.

VII

CRIME AND SUPERSTITION

I have not found many superstitions about crime, probably 777
because there are so few professional criminals among the Maria. We have already seen how valuable blood is as a fertiliser. In one case I heard of women throwing their rings on a murdered man's memorial stone as it was being carried to the grave. Afterwards they picked up these rings and wore them believing them to be extremely lucky. But

[1] Havelock Ellis goes so far as to say that 'whenever a woman commits a deed of criminal violence it is extremely probable that she is at her monthly periods', but Stanley Hall assembles evidence to show that this view is over-stated. Hall, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 500.

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
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a hysterical condition, rebuked him and said that she would not go to his house or to any other, accusing him of having brought the trouble on her. Hirma got annoyed and kicked her violently in the stomach and the vagina. Mase was three months pregnant, and it is probable that the kick which was simply intended to bring her to her senses was the real cause of her death.

II

Only rarely do the complications of infidelity lead to suicide. A girl called Kare of Kosalnar came one day to Kadti Pandu as a Paitu wife. This means that she forcibly entered his house of her own accord, and he had to agree to accept her as his wife. They lived together for five months. Then there was a quarrel, and Kare went off to another village, Pharaspal, where she repeated the same trick with another man. Pandu ordered her to come home and she refused. So he beat her and brought her back by force. The following day the girl disappeared, and a search discovered her hanging from a mahua tree.

The reaction of Barse Konda to unchastity in his family circle was remarkable. He had one daughter named Jabbo. This girl was that very rare thing, a Maria girl of promiscuous habits. She was first married to a man of Samgiri. Then she went to a man at Gongpal. From him she went to a man at Molasnar. From him she went to a man at Palnar. Some time in 1937 she left her Palnar husband and went to live with Kawasi Kosa of Rewali. For the Korta Pandum, the harvest festival of the new cucumbers and gourds, Jabbo went to her home at Nakulnar, and after three days her father Konda took her back to Rewali. Rewali is a notoriously ill-tempered village, and when Konda arrived he was badly received and abused by several of the people for his daughter's behaviour. He went home, angry and depressed, told his wife what had happened, and got very drunk. At supper he caught his wife by the hair and beat her. She ran away to a neighbour's house. Then Konda got out his drum and danced with it all night long. As the first cocks crew, he went into his house and hanged himself from the central beam of the roof.

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
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674 578 It is not easy to say whether Bande's motive here was primarily to keep control of the family property or not. His feelings were probably very mixed. He was an elderly man and the Peda of the village. Division of his herd of cattle might do something to lower his prestige. As Peda he was accustomed to give abuse, not to receive it. He believed, and in this he had the support of the villagers, that his brother's claim was unreasonable. Outraged dignity, wounded pride and sheer exasperation probably played as strong a part in his catastrophic revenge as any other motives.

Sometimes the quarrels arise about what may seem to the outsider quite trivial matters, though we should never fall into the error of judging the value of things to an aboriginal by our own standards. For example, two murders were committed on account of cocks, one a cock that was needed at a feast in honour of a brother-in-law and the other a fighting-cock.[1] In another case the quarrel arose between two brothers about the possession of a drum which was sold for two rupees ten annas, out of which the real owner only got a rupee.[2] In yet another case a youth murdered his own father as a result of a dispute over a tobacco crop. The son had a debt of four rupees to pay, and he asked his father to give him the tobacco so that he could sell it and pay off his debt. The father wanted the proceeds to buy clothes for himself. Tempers rose quickly and soon the father was saying that his son could sell the children to pay off his debt, but he would never part with his tobacco, a remark that cost him his life.[3]

II

762 Suicides from economic causes are extremely rare. This remarkable fact has been noticed also for the Bantu in South Africa. 'Conditions of starvation, prolonged droughts and disease among live-stock', says Laubscher, 'are common, and still no cases of suicides are known to magistrates of as much as thirty years' experience which can be considered as the result of despair in the face of economic difficulties'.[4] Only one Bison-horn Maria, Veko Lakhma, killed himself as the

[1] See Case Nos 52 and 16.
[2] Case No 40.
[3] Case No 86.
[4] Laubscher, op. cit., p. 290.

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
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result of the burden of a debt. Yet his debt was not especially heavy. He had engaged himself to work for a Thakur as a Kabari against a loan of seventeen khandi-measures of paddy. He worked for a year, and then wearied of it. The Thakur beat him for his slackness, and Lakhma hanged himself in his employer's field—probably as much from a desire for revenge as from despair.

The story of Alami Mata throws some light on the attachment of the Bison-horn Maria to their cherished institutions. This youth, about twenty years of age, was devoted to dancing and used to preserve his magnificent hereditary bison-horn head-dress with the greatest care. In a neighbouring village lived a beautiful girl, unmarried and in love with him, whom he used to meet during the dances. One day he found his splendid horns and feathers stolen. He would not go to dance without his finery; he could not meet his girl; on top of it all his father abused him for not working hard enough. Life without music, rhythm and love was not worth living, and he ended it.

Another young Maria boy, Poyami Kosa, hanged himself after a dispute about clothes. He went with a group of others to cut grass; they all put their clothes together, but when the time came for recovering them, Kosa's cloth was claimed by another boy. In spite of everything Kosa could say the other boy went off with it. This may seem a trivial enough matter, but to people as poor as the Maria the loss of a cloth is serious and during the dispute Kosa was greatly insulted. The combination of loss and insult was too much for him, and he hanged himself.

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approached, and that in a fit of rage at his wife's infidelity he had killed her; and then later admitted that he had gone to the cave, but denied that he ever approached Jimme sexually. He said that he had been sitting on the rocks above when his wife threw a stone at him. He slapped her, and she fell accidentally from the rocks and was killed.

There can be little doubt, however, that the prosecution story was true. When the police searched the cave, they found on the dust of the floor the clear signs of a woman lying on her back and a pair of footprints on either side of the marks made by the woman's buttocks. This clearly shows that intercourse practised according to the normal aboriginal technique had been in progress, and Jimme confirmed the fact.

Paklu, when I saw him in jail, was still young, a man of fine physique and good-looking. He has behaved well in jail, for he has been made a Lambardar and wears the tall yellow cap which indicates his office.

Nine cases of suicide were due to disputes between wife and husband. Thus Kome is said to have been quick-tempered, a person who always exaggerated things. She was a young wife, only twenty years old, and when her husband came in one day tired and wet from the fields, and found no food ready, and abused her, she took a rope and slipped out of the house. Her husband, also young, found some stale food and took it back to the field. When he came home in the evening his wife was dead.

Mate had a row with her husband over lighting the fire. He was drunk and beat her, and she attacked him. But her husband's elder brother, to whom she was strictly taboo and who had no business to touch her, intervened and beat her also. During the night, she left the house and tried to get across the Indrawati River in order to reach her mother's house. But there was no ferry and she hanged herself with her clothes. It is worthy of note that although there was a deep river at hand, the girl preferred to end her life by hanging.

An unusually tragic incident occurred at Metapal in February 1937. Kuhrami Hurra returned one day from the bazaar and found that one of his calves had been killed by a panther. Rightly or wrongly he considered that this was

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
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the fault of his wife and daughter, who had not tied the calf up properly in the evening. Hurra's wife was well known for her quick temper; she was continually quarrelling, especially if her husband ventured to interfere with household matters, and it is said that the daughter had learnt to take her mother's side. After the quarrel about the calf, the older woman set fire to their house and took her daughter away to the field-house out in their clearing. Here she first hanged her daughter and then herself.

Yet another wife from the same area, Galle, was obviously a bad housewife; she used to tell her husband that she would throw their child on the ground if he ordered her to do any work. On the day of her death she had been asked to prepare leaf-cups and food for the whole family—a large one. This seems to have been the immediate cause of disturbance, and she hanged herself. But there was undoubtedly a long and miserable tale of domestic unhappiness behind it.

In three remarkable cases it was the husband who committed suicide from remorse and sorrow. Barse Chewa asked his wife, a sick and miserable woman, to light the fire early in the morning. She was rather slow about it and Chewa beat and kicked her, knocking her unconscious. He was so ashamed and frightened that he killed himself. Sori Deva, angry at the loss of two of his cows, miserable because he had beaten his wife, did the same. So did Marvi Dhodsa who beat his wife, who was suffering from sore eyes, for not keeping the baby quiet. That night Dhodsa felt very miserable; he realized that his wife was ill, that he had no right to beat her, and that the child too had sore eyes and was bound to cry. He crept out of the house and hanged himself on a mahua tree with his own cloth.

III

THE POLYGAMOUS HOME

The strains and stresses of a polygamous household do not appear to result in tragedy so often as we might expect. Polygamy is not perhaps very common among the Maria, for the simple reason that there are not enough women to make it often possible. Those men who do keep more than one

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
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674 annas each for not living happily together. One morning
578 the elder wife went to fetch Harma from the field-hut where
595 he had been sleeping, and found him dead, killed by the younger woman who could not endure his ill-treatment longer.

The complications and petty miseries of a polygamous home are illustrated in the story of how Sori Dome murdered her elder co-wife, Chule. Even while their husband was alive, the two women were always quarrelling. Three years before his death Dome beat Chule over the head with a bit of a broken plough, and Chule took a whole month to recover from the blow. Dome used continually to threaten the older woman that one day she would kill her. After the husband's death, matters got even worse. Chule was old and feeble and suffered from yaws, which made her irritable and exacting. But the two women continued to live together, along with their husband's elder brother, in their husband's house. Just before the tragedy, Chule made peevish complaints that Dome had been extravagant in using up the rice, to which the other replied that, since she had eaten it, it was not wasted. One evening, after they had been working in the fields and quarrelling all the time, they set out to go home. Dome had an axe in her hand and her two children were with her. Chule was carrying a bamboo basket. Dome urged the old woman to hurry up, but she replied that her feet were hurting her and she would follow later. Exasperated, Dome pushed Chule by the back of her neck and then struck her a blow with the axe. The old woman fell down, and Dome hit her again and she seems to have died on the spot. Medical examination, however, showed that there was no fracture and no dislocation either in the head or ribs where the blows had fallen. Dome did not use the sharp edge of the axe, and it is possible that she did not intend to kill the woman, but only wanted to teach her a lesson. On the other hand, of course, it was greatly to her advantage that Chule should be eliminated.

578 It is perhaps rather surprising that there is not more
595 suicide in polygamous households. But it does, of course,
762 occur. Bandi, headman of Khutepal, had two wives. They quarrelled and the elder woman hanged herself. Masa of Samgiri also had two wives, and the younger girl quarrelled

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with him saying that he did not give her proper clothing or ornaments and that he did not sleep with her often enough. Jealous and frustrated, she hanged herself in a fit of despair. Poyami Gupe of Bastanar, a girl of about eighteen years, was widowed at sixteen and remarried two years later as the junior wife of Guddi. One day, about seven months after the new marriage, Gupe went to collect young bamboo shoots—a great delicacy to the aboriginal—and came home rather late in the evening. For this she was scolded by her co-wife and no doubt accused of every crime that jealousy could suggest. She left the house and went to stay with her maternal uncle. Guddi went to bring her back, but rather than go with him she hanged herself.

Kawasi Dulga's reaction was unusual. He appears to have been one of those husbands who should never have tried such an experiment; a man of weak character who could not keep his two wives in order. The women were always quarrelling and made his home and life a misery. One day he went with the younger to the bazaar and, as they were coming home, they quarrelled and Dulga slapped her. Presently he told her to go ahead as he wanted to relieve himself. She walked on a little way, but he did not appear and when she went back to look for him she found him hanging from a tree.

IV

The relationship between the wives of brothers is carefully regulated. Between an elder brother and his younger brother's wife there is an absolute taboo: there is no stronger rule of avoidance in all primitive society. But the younger brother stands in a special and privileged relationship to his elder brother's wife: he can flirt with her; he can make indecent jokes; he can become her lover; after her husband's death he has the first claim on her person and if she marries anyone else he has a right to compensation.[1]

It is obvious that among a people where brothers often live together, sharing house and lands, where jealousy is strong and sexual desire passionate and keen, such a tradition may

[1] For a detailed study, see Shamrao Hivale, 'The Dewar-Bhauji Relationship', *Man in India*, Vol. XXIII (1943), pp. 157–67.

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refused. She abused him saying, 'Puk *nak*, lick my privates', and told him to go home without her. This, he said, was impossible and she again abused him. He got so angry that he hit her on the head with a heavy piece of wood and she died immediately.

More frequently these disputes have ended in suicide. The wife of Markami Pide was in love with another man, and frequently used to leave her husband and go to stay at her mother's house where it was possible for her to meet her lover. Pide as frequently would go and bring her back and beat her. At last she killed herself in despair. Mundri, the wife of the headman of Kaklur, frequently quarrelled with her husband over the question of visiting her parents, and one day when she wished to go and her husband stopped her, she became so miserable that she hanged herself from a mango tree.

Wooden tobacco box
(*Length* 3½")

In two cases it was the husband who committed suicide. Marvi Gutami, a young man of twenty-two years, married a girl to whom he was much attached. Indeed it is said that he loved her so much that he was quite unable to control her, and she got on the nerves of the older women in the house who lost no opportunity of venting their spite upon her. As a result she often used to go away to her mother's house, and Gutami would have to go and bring her back. One day when this happened, the youth found that she had gone into hiding elsewhere. Despairing of happiness, he returned home and hanged himself behind his house. Kawasi Hurra's wife Lakhmi did not care for him and was always slipping away to her parents' house. He brought her back five or six times, but she would run away again after staying with him for a few days. Hurra seems to have been very fond

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762 574 573 of the girl, and her constant absence made him so miserable that he ended his life.

A situation where the roles of the characters were reversed, and it was the mother who wished to visit the daughter's house, led to an even more pathetic tragedy.

In November 1939, a mother at Killepal was rebuked by her son and daughter-in-law for not helping them with the reaping of the kosra crop. She had been a widow for ten years and seems to have got a certain amount of pleasure and relaxation from paying visits to her married daughter at Dilmilli. This was resented by the son and brother with whom she lived. When she found that she was to be robbed even of this happiness, she killed herself.

VII

PARENTS-IN-LAW

X 674 606 The relationship between a man and his parents-in-law is always difficult. But the general tradition in Maria, as in Hindu society, is that the older people should treat a son-in-law with respect and consideration. Neglect of this rule is apt to arouse very strong feelings in a man's mind. Marvi Kesa had three wives, the youngest of whom ran away to her parents' house after a beating. This is a common practice of aboriginal wives, and causes great annoyance to their husbands especially if the parents take their daughters' side. On this occasion Kesa followed his wife to the house and found her enjoying a drink of rice-beer with the neighbours. He went to his father-in-law and asked him why he had not sent his wife back. The older man replied casually that she had only arrived that morning, and this answer so annoyed Kesa that he struck him on the head with his axe and killed him.

In another case it was the mother-in-law who was the victim. Marvi Hinga took his wife Hirme, who was suffering from fever, to a neighbouring village to a Siraha for treatment. He stayed with her during the night and the next morning returned to his house, where he was seen by his mother-in-law. She, thinking that he had left her daughter uncared for and was now wandering about the village seeking enjoyment, abused the youth saying that he

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ed to the father-in-law that Khuja had abused her, repeating the words that he had used. This annoyed Khuja so much that he followed her home, and when they came to the boundary of the village, threw her down and beat her to death. Khuja's anger may have been due to the fact that he was sensitive about being a Lamhada, particularly as he had married a very young wife.

In two cases conflict between a Lamhada and his father-in-law led to suicide. Ghasia went to dance with the other boys and girls of the village when he should have been working at home. Akali Modi had served three years for his wife, to whom he was married four months before his death. As is often the case he was continuing to serve his father-in-law until the payment of the bride-price was completed. On the night before his suicide, two cows broke their tethering cords and damaged the crops. On such occasions it is almost routine to blame the Lamhada, and the father-in-law doubtless bewailed his mistake in giving his daughter to such a fool and made offensive remarks about the boy's mother. Modi, who is said to have been a sensitive, quick-tempered youth waited till the rest of the family went into the fields and then hanged himself from a tree outside the village.

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671 rage and killed his father while he was still eating.

762 Remorse for drunkenness was the rather unusual cause of a suicide at Dualkarka. Sori Hura was a heavy and reckless drinker. One day as he was indulging himself as usual, a friend, the Kandki of Kuakonda, a rather influential man, happened to visit him and gave him a little lecture on the evils of alcoholism. Hura expressed himself as greatly moved by his advice, and arranged for him to be rewarded with a feast. But directly the Kandki went away, Hura set to work to drink again. By midnight he was in a sorry condition of intoxication and remorse, and went into an inner room and hanged himself. It was about midnight, and his wife was husking grain in the next room for a festival on the morrow. Hearing a suspicious sound, she went to see what had happened and found her husband dead.

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congress. Hebka Masa killed his wife Pakli in consequence of a long dispute, but immediately before the tragedy she refused to lie with him. Barse Chappe, a polygamous invalid, was first refused by both his wives and later by his senior wife because he desired to perform the act in a semi-public place. Marvi Deva saw his wife with a man and when, probably to test her, he asked her to give herself to him and she refused, he killed his baby daughter and tried to kill her. Kosa, an almost imbecile paralytic, asked his wife to have intercourse with him; she abused him and he stabbed her to death. Doga, rejected sexually by his elder brother's widow, was so affronted that he killed her. Mundra, who so brutally treated his wife Pande, asked her to have sexual congress with him and was refused only an hour before he met his death at her hands.

Decorated bauda knife (Length 3')

Such a refusal may also drive a man to suicide. Marvi Joga, the Waddai of Mathadi, was always quarrelling with his wife and threatening to remarry. One day at the funeral ceremony of his brother's son, he drank a lot of surem, and when he came home he tried to have intercourse with his wife. But she refused saying, 'You are always talking about another wife. Why don't you go and get one?' and she went away to sleep in the Room of the Departed. Joga, intoxicated and desperate at his wife's refusal, hanged himself.

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and there was only one building belonging to his brother nearby. At this time of the year everyone was busy in the fields. Hunga therefore caught hold of his wife by the hair, threw her down and prepared to cut her throat. She tried her best to snatch the knife from his hand, but was unable to. The two little girls, Malla and Kosi, who had been sitting in the kitchen, came screaming and tried to save their mother. They cried for help, but there was no one to hear. As they tried to pull their father's hands away from their mother, they themselves got slightly injured. Then Hunga put his knee on Gangi's waist and sat above her holding her hair by one hand, while he sawed through her throat with the knife in exactly the same manner as the priest, at a Maria festival, slowly cuts through the neck of a dedicated pig. When he had cut almost right through the throat and was sure that Gangi was dead, he picked up a rope and went behind the house.

A little while later Hunga's mother, who had been to fetch water, returned to the house. She saw Gangi lying dead and Kosi beside her weeping. The child said that her father had gone behind the house with a rope, and the old woman hurried round and found her son hanging from a rafter of the house, his feet about a cubit and a half above the ground. The knife covered with his wife's blood was lying below. She picked it up and cut through the cord, and Hunga fell to the ground unconscious but still breathing. He recovered, but only to be sentenced to death and hanged. The clothes of Hunga and Gangi, partners in this unnatural tragedy, were buried together and an earthen tomb was raised above them.

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For the Maria (as for the European woman) maternity is the great protection. The reason for the low incidence of homicide among Maria women is possibly connected with the strong aboriginal belief that it is supernaturally dangerous for a woman to take life. This is the ultimate reason why there are no women priests, for the priest has to offer sacrifice. Maria women are not supposed to kill goats or even chickens. They are not permitted to join in hunting. The only pursuit of the kind which is not taboo to them is fishing—but fish are cold-blooded creatures.

It will be noted, however, that the number of Maria women who commit suicide is almost as high as that of Maria men.

II

Five of the 100 homicides were committed by women, and in one of them the woman was helped by a man. Two of these were typical women's crimes arising out of annoyance and exasperation over comparatively small matters. In the first two women, both of whom had been married to the same man and were now widows, were living together. The older widow was so tiresome and so continually nagged the younger that at last the girl could stand it no longer, and gave her three blows with an axe whereon she died. In the second, a man and his wife were collecting red ants for food when they heard the cries of a child in extremity. They went to the place and found a little girl about ten years old lying on the ground with her neck broken. She had been killed by her step-mother for not doing what she was told. The older woman had climbed up a tree and was picking the leaves and throwing them down. She called to the child and asked her to bring her basket closer so that she could drop the leaves directly into it. When the child disobeyed, her step-mother came down from the tree and beat and kicked her, then twisted her neck till she died. Both the older woman and the girl were weak and hungry for want of food. There was no rice in their house and they had been living on mahua for days. Fatigue and hunger played their part in this tragedy, as so often happens.

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and Bodenar. The man was carrying an axe and told him he was travelling from Tikanpal to Killepal, and he asked for and obtained a cucumber to eat for supper. The witness noticed that the woman looked angry and sat at some distance, refusing to speak to her companion. Later that same evening the villagers of Bodenar saw a man carrying an axe and cucumber and followed by a woman enter the village, and they allowed them to sleep in the village Rest-house. The following morning they discovered the man lying dead with a deep wound going right into the brain. The woman had disappeared.

Later Pande described the continual torture and mutilation to which she was subjected by Mundra. She said that on the night of the tragedy, in the Rest-house Mundra had forcibly attempted to have intercourse with her and she had prevented him. He had declared that if she did not consent, he would cut her to pieces with an axe. They then lay down separately and both tried to keep awake, she in order to prevent him from approaching her in her sleep and he to ensure that she did not run away. But at cock-crow, exhausted by his long journey, he fell asleep and Pande killed him with the axe and made her escape. She was sentenced to transportation for life but the Sessions Judge made a strong recommendation for mercy, and in appeal her punishment was reduced to one year's imprisonment.

In this murder several factors operated simultaneously. There was the desire for revenge for years of cruelty. There was the imperative necessity for Pande to eliminate a man who would not leave her alone, and who would neither allow her to live happily with him or to go anywhere else. There was the fear of treatment by the Siraha. There was the extreme fatigue and exhaustion of her attempted flight, the misery of her capture, the further long journey with little food, and finally a long night's vigil.

IV

Dislike of the husband may equally result in suicide when the woman is weaker or the social odds against her are too heavy. Budri did not love her husband and whenever she was taken to his house ran away from it. After this had

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762 happened several times, she hanged herself. Kunjami Burji, a widow, was desired by Konda who sent seven men, according to custom, to bring her to his house. In spite of her remonstrances, she was taken forcibly, but managed to escape with her three little children and hanged herself in the house while they were asleep. A young girl, Poyami Pande, was given to her mother's brother's son in marriage. After the feast, the couple were shut up together in a room as usual for the consummation of the marriage. But Pande objected, fought her way out of the room, and ran home where she was thoroughly scolded for such improper conduct. That night she hanged herself.

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It is possible that in this case some important evidence was suppressed by the witnesses, for there was a suggestion that the murdered woman had committed incest with her brother. The fear of excommunication and fines would be sufficiently strong to induce everyone to keep quiet about this. On the other hand, it is equally possible that the suspicion of his wife's infidelity was a delusion of Chamru's disordered mind.

Other Maria have been content to take their own way out of the world, when the psychotic disturbance became too strong for them. Many different symptoms are recorded as preceding such suicides. Baiha Ganga, for some days before his death, refused to eat and when people approached him attacked them with his stick. Bongi Maria was subject to periodic attacks of insanity; he tried to kill himself three times before he finally succeeded. Others displayed a marked narcissistic attitude, wandering aimlessly in the jungle, refusing to talk or work; such were Saradu, a northern Muria, who used to wander naked, Nari Maria, Pakli, a little girl about ten years old, and Marvi Mundi, a woman who had suffered since childhood from attacks during which she refused to eat and wandered about aimlessly, neglecting the dozen children she had borne.

There is finally the strange and sombre case of Markami Hirme, mother of four children and about to bear a fifth. In her pre-pubertal period she had been subject to epileptic fits, but was treated by the local Siraha, and was believed cured. On 22 October 1935, at her home at Gonderas, the epilepsy recurred, and she became 'strange in her behaviour'. She was in the eighth month of pregnancy. Two days later, when her husband was out watching the crops, and her eldest daughter had gone for water, she hanged herself from a rafter of the house in the presence of her three little children.

Now such a death is the most dangerous in the world. The woman who dies in pregnancy or childbirth is known throughout India as the Churelin or Churin; in Bastar she is often called the Ondar Muttai, the Old Bee Woman, who attacks men with the fury of a swarm of bees. Hirme's husband and the village elders seem to have been unable to decide what to do. Not one of them dared to touch the

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158 762 corpse, and it remained hanging for two days in the house. Then, so the villagers declare, the foetus of the unborn child automatically discharged itself from the womb. By this time the necessary ceremonies of protection had been performed, and the body was cut down.

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An ingenious attempt to hoodwink the police occurred at Jhoriabadhan in 1923. After the mysterious disappearance of a little boy aged two-and-a-half years the police came to investigate, and the villagers took the constable to the threshing-floor whence the child had disappeared, and there showed him a boy about six years old. They told him that this was the missing boy and that he had been found wandering in the fields. Even the child's own mother declared that this was the lost boy, and since all the members of the family as well as the villagers supported her, the police went away. There is no doubt, however, that a child did disappear and it is probable that he was offered as a human sacrifice.

In one case, but only one, a prosecution witness was so troubled by his family that he committed suicide. On the whole, however, the Maria appear to co-operate with the police very well. In 88 cases out of 100, they assisted in some way or other. Sometimes they reported the matter at the police station. Sometimes they themselves arrested the murderer and kept him in custody until the police arrived. They co-operated by assisting at the inquest which is held in a village when the police arrive to investigate a suspicious death. In one case the villagers took an active and dangerous part in pursuing a convict who had escaped from jail with the result that one of their number was killed.

TABLE TWENTY-ONE

Illustrating the kind of assistance given to police in 100 cases

Information withheld from police	12
Homicide reported by villagers	79
Accused arrested by villagers	25
Accused gives himself up to police	9

This was the exciting pursuit of Markami Mundra in 1934. Mundra was convicted in 1933 and sentenced to two years' imprisonment for an act of violence. On 3 May 1934, he escaped from jail with another convict and a proclamation was issued for their arrest. A Sub-Inspector of Police went at once to Gudra, Mundra's own village, and told the people that a reward of fifty rupees had been offered for his

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investigation, committal proceedings and Sessions trial. Such crimes may have come to light later through the panchayat reporting them at their own convenience, or through the widow or other relative of a murdered man being dissatisfied with the compensation which the murderer had been ordered to give, while in some Parganas informers arose who subsequently used their supposed prestige with the police to become petty local tyrants. Conversely on occasions panchayats, disgusted with the failure of the police to investigate thefts or with the acquittal of guilty persons by the Tahsildars, took the law into their own hands and had the thieves killed.[1]

I make no apology for quoting Grigson at length on this subject, for it was largely due to his efforts that a new tradition was established in Bastar, and that the Maria began, however slowly and imperfectly, to co-operate with the administration. The new attitude is indeed a remarkable tribute to the sympathy and intelligence of the Bastar police and the understanding and courtesy of the committing Magistrates and Sessions Judges. Even so I doubt whether the Maria will ever be able to overcome the tribal and religious objections to revealing their inmost thoughts in the public Court.

This fear of the outside world is revealed in a number of examples where Maria have committed suicide rather than be involved in police enquiries and legal proceedings.

The aboriginal is not alone in finding litigation and contact with officialdom trying to the nerves. Hunga of Kothiagura was involved in a cattle-theft case and believed himself badly treated by the constable investigating it. He prepared a petition to the Superintendent of Police and wrapping it carefully in a parsa leaf set out to Jagdalpur to present it. But on the way, his fears, his grievance, his sense of lost prestige overwhelmed him, and he hanged himself from a parsa tree by the roadside.[2]

Marvi Mundra of Cholnar had some of his cattle stolen and

[1] Grigson, op. cit., pp. 284 ff.

[2] The case of Saradu, a young Maria landlord of Bermakot, in 1933, belongs to the bad old days before the taking of free supplies and labour had been prohibited. An Excise Sub-Inspector came to the village to enquire into a case of illicit distillation. He does not seem to have received all the supplies he wanted, and so he threatened the landlord, who came of a leading Muria family, with prosecution on some false charge. Saradu hanged himself rather than face the indignity and disgrace.

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762 reported the matter to the police. The case proceeded normally, and Mundra was summoned as complainant to the court. The accused called two defence witnesses, a matter which seems to have shocked Mundra profoundly, who being simple and honest himself and knowing his case to be true, seems to have expected it to be settled in his favour immediately. In the evening, under the great trees of the travellers' camp at Dantewara, he expressed his concern to his companions and while all were asleep went away and committed suicide.

In case No 1, Lakhmu of Erpund, an old timid Maria who may have himself been involved in the crime, was called by the police as a prosecution witness against his step-son. The boy's mother was so angry at his being willing to give evidence against her son, and she and the family abused the old man so much that before the matter came to trial he hanged himself.

Another case, this time of attempted suicide, occurred in connection with a police investigation as recently as 1941. An elderly Maria, Poyami Masa by name, who lived in the beautiful village of Kaklur among the mountains, had a quarrel with his nephew Kosa. Kosa struck the old man with his axe, and was sentenced to imprisonment. While in jail, in order to revenge himself, he made a report to the Administrator that his uncle had murdered a Banjara gypsy some years before, had placed his dead body in the village temple, and had given a feast to the villagers who had hushed up the whole affair. The police investigated the matter and found that actually seven years previously an unknown Banjara had died in the village, and his body had been quietly disposed of by the people in order to avoid the bother of a police enquiry. No one ever knew who the man was, nor was his body ever found. But Poyami Masa was so alarmed at the arrival of the police that he hanged himself on a branch of a tree behind his house, but was cut down by his son before he died. At his trial he was acquitted, the Sessions Judge finding that there was no real evidence against him.

000 The extreme care that is needed in dealing with primitive people, who may easily misinterpret official action, is seen in a deplorable incident that occurred among the Chenchu

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775 of Chichari described how this happened to three of his
758 fellow-prisoners and they all died. Boti of Telam suffered a similar visitation and was ill for a whole year.

768 In several places I found that a house or a village had been
14 moved from its original site after a murder had been committed there. At Aranpur, for example, the house in which Chewa killed his father-in-law was destroyed, and a new house was built elsewhere for the widow and other members of the family. At Doriras the whole village was shifted from its former site in the year following the murder of Kawasi Boti. Muler village also was shifted after the murder of Rawa Harma.

VI

764 The funeral ceremonies of a suicide are performed in the
762 same way with the clothes and ornaments taking the place of the corpse. When Masa's younger wife hanged herself at Samgiri, her body after the post-mortem examination was buried at Dantewara. Her clothes and ornaments were taken out to a cross-roads and cremated according to the customary ritual. Her scythe, rice-husker and winnowing-fan were placed at the spot, but the scythe was picked up and carried home by one of her husband's relatives. Next morning they went to inspect the ashes and found distinct marks of hanging. A chicken was used to divine the cause of death,
[787] and it indicated that the woman had been angry and committed suicide in a fit of temper. The tragedy was in fact due to the girl's complaint that her husband did not pay her enough attention. The chicken's neck was then twisted, the head removed, split into through the beak and thrown away.

762 In Borgum village, the wife of Markami Pide committed
766 suicide because she was in love with another man and did not care for her husband. The body was taken to Dantewara for the post-mortem and buried there. The clothes were taken back to the village and burnt outside together with her mat, winnowing-fan, rice-husker and sickle. The next day the Priest of the Dead put rice and roots round the pyre. He made seven small piles of rice and brought a chicken saying, 'You were angry and put an end to your life; now become cool and rest in peace here and trouble none of us,

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for this is your home'. When the chicken had pecked at the rice, he twisted its neck and threw it on the still-burning pyre. A pig and a cow were then sacrificed and an uraskal erected the same day. After returning to the house they made a rough drawing with flour of the garden and of the house with its various rooms on the floor. On this pattern they again offered rice to a hen saying, 'We have now made a house for you; don't stay outside any longer, but remain here'.

The ghost of the suicide, like that of a murderer, becomes a Mirchuk and lives in an ant-hill. If the Mirchuk gets angry, it may possess a member of the family, and he too may commit suicide unless the proper offerings are not made at once. The suicide's ghost may also come to the village and cause trouble in a variety of ways. As we have seen elsewhere, the Mirchuk is often used as a familiar by witches. It is most important that the soul of a suicide should not be 'mingled with the Dead'. In some villages they say that this prohibition is absolute. In Dugeli, they said that they should wait a year. A menhir should not be erected. A remarkable double suicide at Khutepal illustrates the danger of ignoring these rules. Bandi, the headman of this village, had two wives. One day they quarrelled, and the elder wife hanged herself in a rage. Her funeral ceremony was performed as though the death had been a natural one. Her soul was mingled with the Dead, and an uraskal memorial pillar was erected for her in the place used by other members of the clan. It is believed that, when this is done, the suicide's ghost quarrels with the other ghosts of the clan and annoys them. In this case the angry Dead so troubled the wife of Bandi's younger son, who was living in the same house, that she too committed suicide after a quarrel with her mother-in-law. This second suicide was regarded by the villagers as the immediate result of having erected a memorial pillar and mingled the soul of the older woman with the ancestral Dead. When the girl's ceremonies were performed, therefore, they carefully burnt her clothes in a place away from the usual crematorium and, although they gave her an uraskal, they did not sacrifice a cow or hang its tail in the usual manner round the stone.

At Dualkarka, however, they said that an uraskal should

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764 never be made *for* anyone who commits suicide or is killed by violence. Here they described how, when the members of the household in which a suicide has occurred are feasting at the close of the funeral ceremonies, they suddenly feel as though somebody is strangling them, and to get rid of this unpleasant feeling they have to go to the village boundary and make the usual offerings. If the dead man has been killed by a tiger or has been murdered, the relatives feel that they are being mauled by some great animal or that an unseen hand is belabouring them with a heavy stick.

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II

TABLE OF 50 MARIA SUICIDES

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No	Name, sex, age and place	Date	Brief history
1	Akali Modi, 18, of Kosalnar	14.8.38	He was a Lamhada and badly treated. Just before the tragedy his father-in-law scolded him for not tethering the cattle properly.
2	Alami Mata, 25, of Pahurnar	16.11.31	His dancing outfit was stolen. He was scolded by his father. He was unable to meet his girl.
3	Atami Kosa, 50, of Potali	31.1.35	He suffered from a painful ulcer and stomach trouble.
4	Baiha Ganga, 50, of Kukanar	22.6.32	He was regarded as mad and taken by his family for treatment to the Siraha.
5	Barse Chewa, 40, of Gamawada	23.7.34	He beat his wife and thought he had killed her.
6	Barse Konda, 35, of Hitawar	8.10.38	His daughter misconducted herself and he was defamed for it. He danced all night and hanged himself at dawn.
7	Bodri (f.), 24, of Bodenar	8.1.33	She could not bear living with her husband.
8	Galle (f.), 9, of Goriapal	18.3.32	She was very independent of her husband, and when he tried to force her to cook against her will, she hanged herself.
9	Hunga, of Kothagada	17.8.37	He was accused of receiving stolen property, had lost his cattle and was troubled by the police.
10	Karti Kare (f.), 18, of Kosalnar	8.8.39	She was newly married, but after a quarrel ran away to another man. Her husband forced her to come home.
11	Karti Sukri (f.), 15, of Pondum	19.10.36	She was suffering from severe pains and undue prolongation of her menstrual period.
12	Kalesami Boti, 40, of Pondum	22.5.33	His son had died.
13	Kawasi Deve (f.), 45, of Killepal	4.11.39	She was a widow living with her son and brother. They abused her for not working hard enough.

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14	Kawasi Dulga, 30, of Dilmili	22.1.37	He had two wives who were always quarrelling.
15	Kawasi Hurra, 21, of Siringuda	4.6.40	His wife, whom he loved, did not care for him and was always running away and did not even cook properly.
16	Kawasi Marka, 50, of Maolibhata	29.7.38	He had been blind for seven years, and had long been gloomy and depressed.
17	Kome (f.), 20, of Kodber	12.8.32	She was a sensitive, quick-tempered girl. Her husband scolded her for not cooking in time.
18	Kunjami Baidi (f.), of Gadiras	3.3.39	She suffered from severe pains in chest and stomach.
19	Kunjami Burji (f.), 28, of Perpa	21.3.34	On her husband's death, a man who was her younger cousin claimed her. She was taken to his house, but escaped and hanged herself.
20	Kuhrami Pide (f.), 40, of Metapal	6.2.37	Mother and daughter (No 21) were very quick-tempered and specially resented any interference in household matters from Hurra, Pide's husband.
21	Kuhrami Pande (f.), 16, of Metapal	6.2.37	One day Hurra found a calf had been killed by a panther. He scolded the women and they hanged themselves.
22	Lakhmi (f.), 15, of Badrenga	9.11.40	She disliked her husband, tried to escape, but was always brought back.
23	Markami Hirme (f.), 35, of Gonderas	24.10.35	She was an epileptic. She hanged herself when eight months pregnant.
24	Markami Hunga (f.), 55, of Gongpal	1.5.37	She suffered from yaws and was very miserable.
25	Markami Kosi (f.), 35, of Rasawahi	11.7.37	The pain at menstruation drove her mad.
26	Markami Pandu, 50, of Parcheli	16.2.38	His wife scolded him for not thrashing the crop and for drinking too much. He may have been intoxicated at the time.
27	Marvi Dhodea, 24, of Goriapal	17.5.39	He beat his sick wife for not caring for their child and felt very sorry for it.
28	Marvi Gutami, 22, of Katakanda	24.8.38	He loved his wife very much, but she was careless and used to leave him for her parents' house.
29	Marvi Mundi (f.), 45, of Oriyapal	9.11.32	She had fits of insanity from childhood.
30	Marvi Mundra, of Cholnar	29.12.35	He went to Dantewara as a prosecution witness in a cattle-lifting case, and got frightened.

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31	Matu (f.), 20, of Kosalnar	17.8.35	She was beaten by her husband and his elder brother, and ran away, hanging herself on the banks of the Indrawati River.
32	Mundri (f.), 30, of Kukur	26.11.32	She was a quarrelsome woman and used to run off to her parents' house. Her husband stopped her and she hanged herself.
33	Muke (f.), 40, of Bhejripadar	1.8.35	She had suffered acutely from pains in head and stomach. Her husband took her to a Siraha, but it did no good.
34	Nadi, 20, of Mandar	12.12.35	He had been insane since childhood.
35	Padami Dhudi, 42, of Naktoka	2.12.33	His old mother used to scold him for not working properly; he had severe headaches.
36	Pakli, (f.), 10, of Takhapal	19.7.32	She was probably an imbecile. The Siraha had tried to treat her, but to no avail.
37	Poriami Bire (f.), of Kondre	21.9.36	Her husband was sick and she did not look after him properly. For this her son rebuked her severely.
38	Poyami Gupe (f.), 18, of Bastanar	29.7.39	She had been widowed and then became the second wife of a man. Her co-wife quarrelled and she ran away.
39	Poyami Hirma, 22, of Kokalpal	21.9.40	He was probably insane. He could not work properly.
40	Poyami Kosa, 15, of Sargipal	16.12.39	Someone took his clothes and he was greatly upset by the loss.
41	Poyami Lakhma, 45, of Gumiapal	24.12.24	He was ill. His two wives and a daughter died. He was sad and lonely.
42	Poyami Mangru, 50, of Dilmilli	20.7.33	He had leprosy and very painful ulcers; he could neither eat nor drink.
43	Poyami Pande (f.), 18, of Kawargaon	17.6.36	She hanged herself rather than sleep with her 'cousin-brother'.
44	Sori Deva, 25, of Kokalwada	9.6.39	His two cows died; he quarrelled with his wife and beat her. She ran away. He felt repentant and miserable.
45	Sori Hirma, 60, of Korra	26.2.32	He injured himself at a festival and was a confirmed invalid.
46	Thadgu, 50, of Gadhia	30.4.40	He loved his son who was ill and took him to a Siraha, with no result.
47	Tiro (f.), 22, of Karka	6.4.39	Her first two babies died. Then the third got burnt and her husband beat her.

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48	Veko Lakhma, of Haram	24.11.31	He was a Kabari bond-servant. He did not know how to pay his debt.
49	Veko Mukka, of Adhkariras	5.11.34	He was probably insane.
50	Wanjami Mase, (f.), 22, of Pujari Palli	5.2.34	She was weak and lazy. She could not feed her baby properly. Her mother-in-law used to scold her constantly.